

BLIND SPOT

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independent, commercial-free news for the K-W region
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Canada hosts G8 summit

Many Canadians take action against G8 imperialism

The Canadian government is hosting the summit meetings of the Group of 8 (G8) countries in Kananaskis, Alberta on June 26 and 27. Last July, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators gathered in Genoa, Italy against the G8 summit, and were met with state-sponsored police brutality that included the murder of activist Carlo Giuliani. The Genoa protests were accompanied by protests worldwide in opposition to the agenda of the G8.

Protests are planned for the area of Kananaskis, but have been beset with problems; in one case, discussions with the Nakoda Sioux about a venue for the planned Solidarity Village broke down after the federal government paid the First Nation \$300,000 for "security costs" for the summit.

Take the Capital protests are also planned for Ottawa for June 26 and 27. A bus has been organized from K-W, departing at 4:30 am on Wednesday the 26th. For more information, email kwtakethethecapital@yahoo.ca or phone 888-4882. Local actions in Kitchener-Waterloo are also planned — see page 7 for more.

Guatemalan visitor tells of effects of G8 decisions

Greg Macdougall
article ID # 10333

Sometimes the effects of the decisions made by select leaders of our world — those in the G8, World Bank or IMF — are missed among the event drama between protesters and police. Sometimes they're hushed up or ignored by the local TV or newspaper outlet. But most often, they're just too far removed for us to care ...

... until the story gets brought to us, like it did on the UW stop of the "On the road to Kananaskis" speaking tour. Carlos Chen Osorio travelled from Guatemala to tell his story about the legacy of the Chixoy Dam project, which is

partially funded by the World Bank. The members of the G8 have effective control of the World Bank and the IMF, which they use as tools to impose their neo-liberal political vision onto other countries.

In 1993, Osorio helped found ADIVIMA, the Association for the Integral Development of Victims of Violence in the Verapaces. It's a group dedicated to dealing with the aftermath of the massacres in 1980 and 1982, when paramilitaries killed a total of 444 of the indigenous Achi people living in the village of Rio Negro to clear land for the dam project, and more people from other Maya Achi communi-

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Building healthy communities in K-W

Saturday May 4 was an exciting day for people in Kitchener-Waterloo engaged in building healthier communities and in opposing the dehumanization of some members of our community.

It was the second day of a two-day Healthy Communities forum, part of the "From The Ground Up" series of events designed to bring people working for community together. It was also the day of the May Day Conference, held at "The Spot" youth drop-in centre by the K-W Youth Collective. The conference was followed by a march against the *Urban Evolution* downtown business plan.

For more, see pages 4 and 5.



OUR PAPER

Blind Spot is the print project of the Kitchener-Waterloo Independent Media Centre (IMC). It is currently published on a (bi?)monthly basis. Initial funds for printing were provided by the Waterloo Public Interest Research Group (WPIRG). We are always looking for feedback, new stories, and volunteers interested in reporting/writing/helping out in other ways. Contact us by phone at (519) 244-1140 or email: imc-waterloo-print@indymedia.org. We are also always looking for financial help — our current printing costs are approximately \$0.25 a paper. Donations of any size are welcome; for a minimum donation of \$25, you can receive a one-year subscription by mail to *Blind Spot*, or a bound volume of all 2001 *Blind Spot* issues (a minimum \$50 donation will get you both). To make donations (\$10 or more receives a charitable tax receipt), send a cheque, payable to "OPIRG" with "imc-waterloo" in the memo line, to: WPIRG; SLC 2139; University of Waterloo; Waterloo, ON; N2L 3G1.

OUR BIAS

The corporate media aren't honest about their biases. They try to pass off their news and reporting as "objective," even though the interests of the owners and advertisers, as well as the personal biases of the reporters and editors shape every word. At the Independent Media Centres, we encourage ordinary people to become the media, and give voice to the concerns of the environmental and social justice movements. We will try to reflect discussions and debates happening within these movements, but with our limited space, we can't cover all perspectives. For the corporate perspective, refer to the corporate media. Anyone can publish articles and comments to our websites:

ontario.indymedia.org and www.indymedia.org

The state of health care in Ontario and Canada

Judy Greenwood-Speers
article ID # 10335

George Orwell's 1984 novel that outlined the Ministry of Truth, which was in charge of lies, comes to my mind when thinking about our health care system, both Provincial and Federal.

The components of the Canada Health Act, such as universal access and coverage, have been threatened recently by both levels of government, in my opinion. Others also must hold this opinion, as over 100,000 signatures have been gathered in Ontario alone by the members of the Ontario Health Coalition (OHC). OHC is Ontario's most broadly-based representative voice for public health care policy and includes over 300 member groups, from seniors to unions to faith-based groups, and I have been a part of it from the start, as well as the Ontario Nurses' Association. The petition that has been circulated in English, Portuguese, French, Korean and other languages, was directed at the Romanow Commission. It said: "We, the undersigned, ask you to recommend in your final report:

- That our health care system be publicly funded, administered and delivered
- That profit-making be kept out of our health care system
- That Primary Care be re-organized into teams of health care professionals serving the needs of and accountable to their communities
- That Home and Long Term Care and

Pharma-care be covered by Medicare

- That the Federal Government increase and stabilize its funding for Medicare
- That the Federal Government take a leadership role in building of healthy communities and a healthy environment as central to a healthy population"

If you too would like to support this, contact the OHC at (416) 441-2502 or www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca.

I cannot stress enough the importance of not being complacent at this point in our history. There has never been a study done that did not support our health care system as being superior to the U.S. for-profit model in almost every key indicator. Most telling, we cover everyone for about nine per cent of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the standard used by countries to measure percentage of what they spend on programs, whereas the U.S. spends over 14 per cent of its GDP, and has 10 per cent of people not covered at all, and 40 per cent with inadequate coverage for major illnesses.

When I spoke with Mr Romanow, he stated that he had authorized three studies on our health care system as well and was awaiting the results. I asked why he didn't use those that have already been done, like the ones published in the New England Journal of Medicine and done by Harvard University, since the U.S. would surely not be biased for us. He agreed that the "preliminary findings" were also pointing to the efficiency and superiority of our non-profit system — let us see what his report says.

Welfare recipients protected by charter

Kevin Smith
article ID # 10112

In a landmark ruling on May 13, the Ontario Court of Appeal found that people cannot be discriminated against for collecting social assistance. This has major implications for all provinces, and private landlords who are sometimes known to discriminate in this way.

This ruling from Ontario's highest court says that welfare recipients are a protected class under the equality provisions of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, just like gender or race.

This ruling came about because of the government's appeal of a divisional court ruling in June, 2000. The court affirmed that the "spouse in the house" rule is discriminatory based on gender, marital status and receipt of social assistance.

The rule, established in 1995, treats households as family units the moment an income-earning boyfriend moves into the home of a single mother collecting social assistance. Previously, under the Family Benefits Act, a couple

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The real threat is international

Maude Barlow
article ID # 10336

It's disgraceful enough that under the Liberals federal funding for Medicare has fallen to an all-time low and private sector funding is at an all-time high.

But something much worse is taking place under Jean Chrétien's watch. His government has made and expanded trade commitments that open up our health system to competition with American and other private for-profit companies, and have done so in such a way that would be difficult and costly to reverse.

Chrétien and Trade Minister Pierre Pettigrew will tell you that Medicare is exempt from trade deals. But at the global, hemispheric and continental trade tables, the grim reality is far different.

Globally, the Chrétien Liberals are strong proponents of freeing up trade in services under the World Trade Organization, or WTO. Absolutely nothing is off the table at these negotiations. At the Seattle WTO meeting, the Canadian government's official position stated that negotiations would proceed even in "areas of particular sensitivity, such as health."

Today, almost 100 countries have listed some sectors of health with the WTO, and astonishingly, Canada is among them. Policy analyst Matt Sanger documents that by listing health insurance at the WTO, the very backbone of Medicare, the Canadian government has further exposed our public system to trade

challenges.

Hemispherically, within the new services negotiations at the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), transnational service corporations are eager to take down domestic barriers to free trade in the global health-care market estimated to stand at about \$3.5 trillion. They are especially interested in countries like Canada, that have maintained public control of this sector. Both the new WTO and FTAA negotiations include a greatly expanded definition of services. Both will have the power to compel governments to demonstrate that their domestic regulations, such as the five principles of Medicare, are "necessary" in order to gain an exemption from trade challenges, and that no less-commercially-restrictive alternative is available.

An American public relations firm has referred to Canada's medicare system as one of the largest "unopened oysters" left anywhere. The United States government is on record that it intends to use the WTO and the FTAA to pry this oyster open. Says the U.S. Trade Representative's Office, "The mandate is ambitious: to remove restrictions on trade in services and provide effective market access. The United States is of the view that commercial opportunities exist along the entire spectrum of health and social care facilities, including hospitals, outpatient facilities, clinics, nursing homes, assisted living arrangements, and services provided in the home."

Continentially, the main threat posed by

NAFTA and its FTAA successor lies in the creeping privatization of health services. If a government allows any currently exempt sector, such as public services, to become even partially privatized (Alberta's Bill 11, for example), the sector no longer qualifies for trade-exempt status. For-profit companies from other NAFTA countries must now be allowed to enter the sector as competitors. Under NAFTA's Chapter 11, those corporations would have the right to huge financial compensation if any government tries to bring now-privatized services back under public management.

The Chrétien Liberals have further undermined Medicare by reversing their stand on monopoly patent protection for foreign-based pharmaceutical companies. They promised in the 1993 election to repeal C-91, the NAFTA-prompted legislation that gave 20-year patent rights to the drug giants, thereby undermining the ability of the mostly domestic generic drug industry to provide low-cost medicines to Canadians. But once in power, the Red Book promises were forgotten, and Canadian drug prices have soared.

Between 1987 and 2002, spending on prescription drugs increased 342 per cent. Prescription drugs are now the fastest-growing component of health-care costs. And rising costs are the main reason given for the need to reform health care.

Finally, the Chrétien Liberals' stated trade strategy to sell Canada's health-care expertise to countries around the world further threatens medicare at home. That's because Canada cannot ask other countries to open their health "markets" to foreign competition if Canada is not willing to do the same. Industry Canada, Health Canada, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, along with some powerful commercial health-care corporations, have singled out health care, especially telehealth, as a high priority area for export growth. Ottawa claims that Canada has the potential to capture 10 per cent of world telehealth markets by 2005, "provided domestic barriers to growth are addressed."

There is an affordable alternative: community based, primary health care that focuses on health promotion, illness prevention, rehabilitation and preventive services along with curative care that extends to pharmacare and home care. But this alternative will never see the light of day as long as our federal government pursues its destructive policies and fails to stand up to right-wing provincial governments slowly dismantling Canadians' most cherished social program. We have our work cut out for us.

'Spouse in the House' rule struck down

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became a common-law family unit for social assistance purposes only after living together for three years. Every province has some variation on the "spouse in the house" rule.

This ruling coincides with some new organizing against the lifetime welfare ban, and other Tory welfare policies. The Committee to Re-member Kimberly Rogers held a press conference in Sudbury recently to release a number of recommendations for social policy changes at the municipal level. While they don't think that the municipality is the problem, they see them as being able to improve the situation for people on welfare until changes happen at the provincial level. They hope that this type of campaign will happen throughout Ontario.

They would like the city to allow welfare case-workers to take extenuating circumstances into consideration before referring fraud cases to the police. They also call on Sudbury city council to urge the provincial government to waive the automatic suspension rule in cases that would cause harm and danger to the individuals involved.

The group points out that even a murderer is entitled to welfare in order to survive. By criminalizing welfare fraud, which is often necessary for survival under the onerous rules of Ontario Works, the government is declaring a "war on the poor". With this recent court ruling, and various political campaigns throughout Ontario, this war may yet be won by the marginalized in society.

See www.povnet.org for more.

K-W Youth Collective holds successful May Day Conference

*K-W Youth Collective
article ID # 10337*

Over 60 youth and students from across southern Ontario came out to participate in the May Day Conference: "From Rights to Resistance", organized by the KWYC. This event was held at "The Spot", in the heart of downtown Kitchener.

In opening the conference, KWYC member Julian Ichim related how police had stated that they were going to shut down the conference because of fire regulations, and were prepared to use live ammunition against the youth during the demonstration planned for the evening. Julian stated that the act of having such a conference was seen as a danger by the police.

He also talked about the work at the Spot, where youth assist youth in dealing with their problems — by providing free food, clothing, and assistance to people on welfare. No one is left to fend for themselves. It is also a venue for ongoing political discussions and events.

Various organizations from across Ontario took part in the conference and presented the work that they are doing in their communities. These included the Heads-Up Collective, CAGE, Project Iraq, the Ontario Coalition Against the Tories, the Ontario Common Front, Anti-Racist Action, the NDP, The Toronto Student Movement, the Windsor Peace Committee, and the University of Windsor Students' Alliance.

After each organization introduced themselves and the work being undertaken within their community, others from the audience were given the opportunity to speak on the issues confronting youth and students today. Issues like Kitchener's urban development plan, and political representation for the youth came up.

This was followed by a panel discussion from invited guests, called "From Rights to Resistance".

Sandra Smith, the national leader of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) spoke first on workers' rights and against George Bush's "War on Terrorism".

This was followed by Jin Ha of the Heads-Up Collective, who talked about their work regarding the detainment of refugees and immigrants. She commenced by saying that many refugees and immigrants are subject to detain-

ment without charge, secret trials, and solitary confinement. She also briefly discussed Bill C-36 and how the bill suspends civil rights of individuals on the basis of suspicion.

Anne Hansen spoke about the need to have a revolution in society, not just temporary measures to deal with immediate problems. A woman from South Africa spoke about the issue of racism.

Pierre George, from the Stony Point First Nation, is brother of native activist Dudley George. Dudley was shot and killed by the Ontario Provincial Police in 1995 when the native burial ground in Ipperwash Provincial Park was being repossessed. He outlined the history of the government takeover of his people's land, and the importance of focusing on youth in his work. He is working for the survival of not just the next generation, but the next seven generations.

After a question and answer session, members of the KWYC proposed a number of resolutions to the organizations at the conference. These included a proposal to build a "Friends of the Spot" program to generate



Pierre George, whose brother Dudley was killed by the OPP in 1995, spoke at the May Day Conference; on his drive home he was stopped by the OPP and given \$300 worth of tickets.

funds to assist the youth in maintaining the space, and developing further programs, such as a 24-hour youth hostel. It was also resolved to end police brutality, to have the city's security policy changed, and to have affordable housing built, as part of the youth's plan of "Urban Revolution", a direct response to the city's program of development called "Urban Evolution". It was also proposed that youth from other cities organize future May Day Conferences to be held in other Ontario cities. These resolutions were overwhelmingly approved by the conference attendees.



The Radical Cheerleaders on stage at the first day of the From the Ground Up Forum: "To the left! To the left! Not to the right, to the left!"

Building community From the Ground Up

Marc Xuereb and Valerie Gennings
article ID # 10340
edited for length by Kevin Smith

How can we empower a community to work for social justice more effectively? How can we help citizens to work together, and change environmental, social, and economic policies? How would we know when we're successful, and whether these changes would have a positive effect?

These are some of the questions a number of local organizations struggled with as they organized a two-day Forum called "From the Ground Up: Building Healthy Communities in Waterloo Region" on May 3 and 4.

A healthy community goes beyond medical health. It includes clean air and water, a sense of belonging, feeling safe in our neighbourhoods, adequate housing, satisfying work, etc. Working toward these ideals using healthy communities principles requires the involvement of as many sectors as possible, and seeks to address the root causes of these issues. Our community has many active "healthy commu-

nities" initiatives, though they may not call themselves that.

We wanted the clean water advocates from rural townships to meet the street youth advocates, community economic development workers, natural foods business owners, etc., and for all of them to come away feeling as if they are part of the healthy communities movement.

A facilitation skills training session was led by trainers from the Fellowship for Intentional Communities two weeks before the event. This workshop produced a team of prepared facilitators who gently guided small group discussions in the directions that the small groups set for themselves. Some groups did come away with detailed plans to meet again. Others were satisfied to share experiences in the few hours they had together and leave it at that.

There were many positive responses to the weekend:

- "I met someone working in a totally different field but who had very similar experiences working with non-profit Boards, and I now have new insights into my work."



The Raging Grannies on stage, celebrating song.

- "I felt supported and listened to. I'm glad the Forum didn't create more work for me, but created curiosity and excitement about working together in the future."

- "Knowing that so many other people are working towards the common goal of a healthier community makes me feel less isolated working on my neighbourhood issue now."

A full report of the Forum and a discussion board for actions coming out of the Forum can be viewed at www.waterlooregion.org/healthy.

Marc Xuereb is a Health Promotion Officer with the Region of Waterloo Health Department. Valerie Gennings is the Central-West Animator with the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition.

May Day march ended by cops

K-W Youth Collective
article ID #s 9297, 9415 and 10338

The K-W Youth Collective's May Day Conference was followed by a rally in front of Kitchener City Hall. Although it is supposedly a public space where anyone can gather, the youth have experienced ongoing harassment from security guards and police there. At the square, the youth and their supporters gathered to listen to speakers and music, and enjoyed food provided by Food Not Bombs. Slogans such as "Homes for All", "People not Profit", and "Homeless not Useless" were written in chalk on the square.

In spite of a large uniformed and undercover police presence, the youth were adamant that they would not be intimidated, and that the struggle undertaken by K-W youth reflects a larger struggle in other cities and in other countries.

At ten o'clock, the rally marched through the downtown area. Stopping at various points along the route, it was explained how *Urban*

Evolution means creating a downtown area that further marginalizes and criminalizes youth.

For more than an hour the march was completely peaceful and lawful. At least three toddlers were part of the march and parents could be seen pushing them in strollers. At approximately 10:45 PM, the march headed for its final destination at Queen and Weber. Unfortunately, the march was stopped short of its final destination when the police moved forward without warning to make arrests and create a confrontation.

The protestors say that the police acted aggressively and used excessive force to disrupt the event, including:

- The use of heavy flashlights and clubs to disperse people.
- Cooperation with bouncers from the bar 'Element', who joined the police action, assaulting protestors and punching one protestor in the face.
- Violently arresting and injuring protestors and bystanders.

- Arresting a bystander who was not involved in the protest.

- Harassing people as they left the protest including issuing bogus traffic tickets (Pierre George, who came to the event to talk about how the Ontario Provincial Police killed his brother, was pulled over by the OPP on his way home and given \$300 worth of tickets).

- Arresting a protestor the day after the event and making threats to arrest others.

- Bogus charges and excessive bail conditions which criminalize protestors and restrict their freedoms to associate or prepare a proper defence.

- Threats before the protest by individual officers that they had orders to shoot protestors who tried to grab police guns.

In spite of constant police harassment, the conference was judged to be an overwhelming success by the participants. Numerous people remarked on the positive non-sectarian atmosphere created by the K-W youth, and thanked the organizers for their work in putting together the conference.

NEPAD to be imposed on people of Africa?

"New Partnership for Africa's Development" on G8 agenda

Janice Jim
article ID # 10334

NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, is one of the major topics of discussion at the upcoming G8 summit. According to the NEPAD web site, it is a "comprehensive integrated development plan" for Africa. Its goals are to "promote accelerated growth and sustainable development, to eradicate widespread and severe poverty, and to halt the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process."

No one disputes the fact that Africa is in dire need. A recent United Nations report states that "extreme poverty has grown steadily in Africa's poorest countries over the past 25 years." In the period of 1995-99, 64.9 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line of \$1 U.S. per day. This is an increase from the rate of 55.8 per cent in the 1960s. According to the report, poverty is so widespread in some countries that there is little margin for investment to stimulate the growth that could benefit many of the poorest.

Many place blame on the IMF and World Bank. Africa's national economies and governments are burdened by heavy debt. The structural adjustment programs (SAPs) promoted by the IMF and World Bank have done little to improve the situation. The programs pressure governments to cut budgets, increase user fees for state services, privatize state enterprises, and remove price controls and subsidies. SAPs result in a decrease in government funding in many areas, namely health care, education and sanitation. Privatization often results in large price increases for necessities like water and electricity. The double whammy of cutbacks and privatization have led to tremendous deprivation and suffering in Africa.

NEPAD was largely devised by three African leaders: Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria, and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria. It was presented at the 2001 Genoa G8 summit as the 'New African Initiative.' It has since been revised and renamed as NEPAD. NEPAD calls for increasing foreign direct investment to Africa, and greater participation by Africa in the globalization process. NEPAD states that Africa is rich in mineral, oil and gas deposits which provide the basis for mining, agriculture, and industrial development. "The new long term vision will require massive, heavy investment to bridge existing gaps. The challenge ahead for Africa is to be able to raise the required funding."

Critics of NEPAD have been vocal in the weeks leading to the G8 summit. NEPAD was

largely devised by the three leaders without public input. Little consultation occurred with civic society, churches, or democratic parties during its development. NEPAD calls for increased foreign direct investment, but increased investment does not mean reduced poverty. An example of this is Latin America, trade and investment increased sharply in Latin America during the '90s, but poverty and economic disparity increased along with the economies.

NEPAD presents a neo-liberal solution to the African problem. NEPAD does not prescribe any alternatives to globalization. The real solution should be devised by African citizens and include workable alternatives. There'll be plenty of photo ops and aid announcements at the summit, but will anything improve in Africa?

Living through the horrors gave him the strength

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ties in the Rabinal district. Among the murdered were Osorio's pregnant wife and two children.

He was forced to flee and live in the mountains along with the rest of the survivors. He later moved away from the area, but felt the need to return to help deal with the veil of silence that had been cast around the horrific crimes by the paramilitaries. Many of those in power at the time, who effectively ordered the paramilitaries to perform the killings, still hold prominent positions of power in the country.

The Association was formed to tell what happened, as well as to do something about it. Projects include community rebuilding, exhuming mass graves, recovery of historical memory and mental health, and human rights work, including working for justice for past crimes committed against the people. Osorio says that living through the horrors of what happened gave him the strength to do the work he is doing: he feels that education can help prevent something similar from happening again, where Achi people are put in paramilitary groups and forced to kill their own people.

Some of the group's successes include building a museum in Rio Negro to commemorate the victims of the massacres, as well as having three of the paramilitary soldiers handed 50-year sentences for their involvement. There have also been meetings with the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank to discuss reparations for the sufferings inflicted on the Achi people, but no agreements have been reached.

The museum was created thanks in part to efforts from Rights Action, a group that works for human rights in Central and South America and education in North America. The museum was inspired by a trip to Washington in 1995, when Osorio saw the Vietnam War Monument with all the soldiers' names on it. The speaking tour in Canada was also organized by Rights Action; it began in Ontario and worked its way through Manitoba and Saskatchewan to arrive in Alberta in time for the demonstrations there.

A significant part of the tour is the interaction with first nation communities here. Osorio feels that although indigeneous peoples the world over are subjected to the same mistreatment and suffering, there is not enough of an awareness of the commonality that exists between them all.

G8 Indymedia coverage

As the leaders meet behind armed guards and the protests take place under a heavy police presence, Indymedia activists will be working to get the story out. Online coverage will include text, pictures, print, audio and video. Key sites are alberta.indymedia.org, ontario.indymedia.org, and the newly-established ottawa.indymedia.org.

The partitioning of Palestine

Eleanor Grant
excerpt of article ID # 10242

The following is an excerpt from a research essay entitled "How Palestine Was Lost: A History From 1880 to 1949" written for a Middle East Studies course at the University of Waterloo. It received an A grade. Footnotes available online.

1947-1949: Catastrophe

The fledgling United Nations soon proved to be putty in the hands of the Zionists. Given the worldwide sympathy for the holocaust survivors, and the Zionists' easy access to funding, diplomatic circles, and the world media, it was a relatively simple matter for them to persuade the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine to come out with a majority report recommending the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. The Arab Higher Committee, still operating in exile under Haj Amin al-Husseini, made a thorough presentation to the United Nations calling for Palestine to become a unitary, secular, democratic state with rule of law and protection of minority rights. But the Arab appeal was ignored. Intense pressures were put on small nations in the General Assembly, and the decision to partition Palestine was

narrowly passed on 29 November 1947, against the better judgement of many participants.

According to the resolution, the British were to remain in control until 15 May 1948 and then hand power over to a Commissioner who would supervise the setting up of the two states. However, the British began withdrawing from the Jewish sections of Palestine immediately upon passage of the resolution, handing over administration and security to the Zionists. Meanwhile they remained in control in Arab areas. The Zionists started receiving arms shipments from Czechoslovakia early in 1948. Meanwhile the Arabs called a general strike and attacked Jewish interests in Jerusalem. Palestinian elites started migrating out of Jaffa [Tel Aviv] and Haifa.

The Israelis proclaimed "Plan Dalet" by which they assumed the right to link together their residential areas within secure borders and remove all potentially hostile inhabitants. It became an excuse for a melee of aggression against Arab homes and villages, culminating in the infamous Deir Yasin massacre of 9 April 1948. The resulting terror made the task of ethnic cleansing very easy — "we advanced like a knife through butter," Menachem Begin would later say — as whole Arab villages were evacuated, Jewish army trucks standing ready to deport the residents. Under Plan Dalet,

Israel expanded its operations into the territory intended for the Arab state. By the time of its pre-emptive declaration of independence on 14 May 1948, Israel was well secured and it controlled 77 per cent of the territory of Palestine, rather than the 56 per cent stipulated by the U.N. Resolution.

The Arab League states marched in to try to secure what was left of Arab Palestine. Egypt occupied the Gaza strip, and Jordan the West Bank.

According to Deborah Gerner, 725,000 Palestinians lost their homes, farms, and businesses in 1947-48. Henry Cattani places it at twice that number. Hundreds of thousands ended up in refugee camps in Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the West Bank, and untold thousands died over the winter of 1948-49. Others fled to Arab countries, which refused them citizenship (not wishing to lend legitimacy to their expulsion). Israel barred all refugees from returning.

In December 1948 the United Nations passed Resolution 194, requiring Israel to offer every Palestinian refugee the choice of repatriation or compensation. But nothing was ever done, despite repeated attempts by the U.N. Conciliation Commission for Palestine to repatriate them or even obtain an inventory of their property from the Israeli government. It was to be only the beginning of years, indeed decades, of open Israeli violations of U.N. resolutions, spurred on by the silent acquiescence of the world.

A devout rabbi living in Israel wrote, "In the end we must come out publicly with the truth: that we have no moral right whatever to oppose the return of the Arab refugees to their land, and that until we have begun to redeem our sin against the Arab refugees, we have no right to continue the Ingathering of Exiles. We have no right to demand that American Jews leave their country, to which they have become attached, and settle in a land that has been stolen from others, while the owners of it are homeless and miserable.

"We had no right to occupy the house of an Arab if we had not paid for it at its value. The same goes for fields, gardens, stores, workshops. We had no right to build a settlement and realize the ideal of Zionism with other people's property. To do this is robbery. I am surprised that Rabbi Herzog and all those who speak in the name of Jewish ethics and who always quote the Ten Commandments, should consent to such a state of affairs."

Local G8 events

Local Action for Global Justice is an ad-hoc group of citizens from Waterloo region interested in advocating for healthy and sustainable communities both here and worldwide, and against corporatist incursion into our rights and freedoms as citizens, such as the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas. Contact info: localaction4community@yahoo.ca or 888-0987, or visit www.geocities.com/localaction4community

TUES. JUNE 25, 7PM
43 Queen St S, Kitchener

A brief documentary will be shown, entitled "So Who Lives Here Anyway?: Alternative Visions of Sustainable Communities." It was produced by the Ecology Action Centre in Halifax, and looks at rural communities struggling to cope with the globalization of trade.

After the documentary, local speakers will discuss globalization and its effect on the community. Discussion to follow.

WED. JUNE 26, 5 PM
depart from corner of Seagram and University

Critical Mass bike ride through downtown Kitchener-Waterloo. Download flyers online.

THURS. JUNE 27, 7 PM
walking tour departs from Kitchener City Hall
8pm coffee house at Mostly Organic Juice Bar

Community walking tour highlighting sustainable businesses, then a coffee house with music, spoken word, and other performances

Solution to Israel-Palestine lies in international law

Kevin Smith
article ID # 10343
see also article ID # 10342

The situation in Israel and the occupied territories is a topic of heated discussion around the world, especially as Israeli tanks step up the occupations, and suicide bombings are on the rise in Israel.

The main problem in this dispute is seen as the lack of enforcement of international law in the case of Israel and the occupied territories, according to University of Western Ontario (UWO) professor Michael Lynk. If we took the application of international law seriously, a number of these problems, including the suicide bombings, would go away.

Lynk gave a lecture on this subject at the University of Waterloo on May 9. He teaches labour law at UWO, and was an observer of elections in Palestine in 1989.

According to him, this is the most intractable, complex, enduring, and international political problem we face today. The Middle East has had more arms sales, diplomatic initiatives, and UN resolutions directed at it than any other part of the world. But, he sees international law as part of a good solution to this and other political problems.

International law is seen as a common touchstone for human rights because it is non-denominational, based on equality, and it protects the vulnerable and oppressed. The current drawback is that enforcement is subject to veto by dominant world powers. In the case of Israel, the United States have vetoed any security council resolution to take action against Israel for their occupation or treatment of Palestinians.

Much of the law concerning the occupied territories is in the fourth Geneva Convention, which concerns treatment of people in occupied lands. People must not be killed or tortured. There must not be permanent alterations to the land, unless they benefit everyone (whereas many highways are just for the settlers). The convention has also prohibited the use of human shields, which have been used in the occupied territories. The Universal Decla-

ration of Human Rights allows for the right of return for Palestinian refugees, which has so far been denied by Israel.

In the recent incidents in Jenin, it was found that Israeli defence forces committed serious violations of international law and human rights, which amount to war crimes. There was no evidence of massacres or extrajudicial killings, but many deaths could have been prevented. Israel has argued that the fourth Geneva convention doesn't really apply, since the land wasn't really taken from Jordan and Egypt, because they didn't have legitimate possession of it. However, this argument is not generally accepted.

After his presentation, Michael answered a number of critical questions. One woman asked about the right of Jews to settle in ancient Judea and Samaria. The response was that Israel currently has no sovereign right over these territories, and cannot legally take them by force. Moreover, by this argument, Palestinians should be able to settle in their historical lands within the state of Israel (which they are not). Another question was how Israel can legitimately respond to suicide bombers. Michael felt that this would be difficult, but that

a just resolution of the occupation would put an end to the bombings.

After the 1967 war (when the territories were occupied), the Arabs refused to recognize or negotiate with Israel.

The question was what choice Israel had other than occupation. The reply was that in that case, they should make their occupation as short as possible, not violate the rights of the occupied peoples, and not establish settlements. Someone asked about the booby-traps that Palestinians had set for soldiers coming into camps. This falls under the right of resistance in international law, as long as civilians are not targeted. To be fair, he said, the actions of the suicide bombers must be condemned as well. Human Rights Watch is preparing another report about them.

"For a better world, we must not attach ourselves to causes or tribes, but to principles... both peoples are entitled to liberty, security, and a viable state. Anything less will breach international law, and prolong the conflict."

K-W Solidarity Network event calendar

In an attempt to reach a wider audience with event promotion efforts, the K-W Solidarity Network is planning to regularly produce a printed event calendar.

The calendar will draw on the event listings from the online community event calendar, CommunityEvents.ca. It will be produced in Adobe .pdf file format, so that it can be easily printed using the Acrobat Reader program, on 8.5" x 11" paper. It will be composed of a one-page graphic calendar layout with brief listings, accompanied by a page or more of detailed listings.

Please help us in this endeavor — if there's somewhere you can find to post the calendar, please do so.

The first edition of this calendar is included in this edition of *Blind Spot*, and future editions will be available on the ontario.indymedia.org/blindspot web site.

Business / organization — Blind Spot partnership

Blind Spot is looking to take the next step in becoming a truly community-based newspaper that fits with the decentralized nature of the Independent Media Centre network.

We are looking to build a network of locations that distribute *Blind Spot* and financially contribute to the printing costs of the papers they distribute. Businesses or organizations that would like to offer copies of *Blind Spot* to their customers/members would cover the costs of printing those papers — currently approximately \$0.25 per paper. They would receive recognition for their contribution in the paper, in the form of a mention in *Blind Spot* that includes address location.

Blind Spot's standard distribution pattern is to distribute a bundle of 20 papers to locations — this would translate to \$50 for one year (10 issues). Participating *Blind Spot* partners would also have extra papers delivered when they run out if there are still copies to be had.

Blind Spot readers would appreciate the financial support being provided to the paper by *Blind Spot* partners and possibly reward this support with increased patronage.

The community will benefit, as *Blind Spot* will expand distribution to reach more people and build a network of community-minded businesses and organizations that are willing to give back to the community. United we can do great things. It's truly a win-win-win opportunity. For more information, phone (519) 244-1140 or email ontario.indymedia.org.

"For a better world, we must not attach ourselves to causes or tribes, but to principles"
